

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 00796 120546Z
ACTION SNM-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 PPT-01 CA-01 SCS-06 DEAE-00

L-03 JUSE-00 /027 W

-----117726 120610Z /23/20

R 260300Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9443

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CONFIDENTIAL VIENTIANE 796

CORRECTED COPY (TEXT PARA TWO)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SNAR

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS LAWS

REF: STATE 170187

BEGIN SUMMARY: THERE ARE NO NARCOTICS LAWS ON THE BOOKS IN LAOS. HOWEVER, OFFICIAL LPDR POLICY IS TO DISCOURAGE THE CULTIVATION, SALE, AND USE OF OPIUM AND TO REHABILITATE OR PUNISH THOSE WHO VIOLATE THIS POLICY. THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE IS REPORTEDLY DRAFTING SPECIFIC REGULATIONS ON NARCOTICS. UNTIL THOSE REGULATIONS ARE PROMULGATED WE SUGGEST THAT POTENTIAL VISITORS TO LAOS BE CAUTIONED ABOUT POSSIBLE PENALTIES FOR DRUG USE IN LAOS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC HAS PROMULGATED NO LAWS CONCERNING NARCOTICS OR OTHER DRUGS SINCE COMING TO POWER IN 1975, AND THE LAWS OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN DECLARED VOID. AS A RESULT, THERE ARE AT PRESENT NO DRUG LAWS IN LAOS.

2. THE LPDR, HOWEVER, HAS INDICATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS

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THAT ITS OFFICIAL POLICY IS TO DISCOURAGE THE CULTIVATION AND USE OF OPIUM. IN MARCH 1977 LAOS SIGNED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE UNFDAC PROVIDING FOR ADDICT REHABILITATION AND CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECTS. THE UN AND THE LAO WERE NEVER ABLE TO AGREE ON THE LOCATION OF THE CROP SUBSTITUTION PROJECT; EVENTUALLY THE PROJECT WAS CANCELLED AND THE UNFDAC OFFICE IN VIENTIANE IS BEING CLOSED.

UNFDAC IS TO BE REPRESENTED IN LAOS BY THE UNDP, AND THE SMALL ADDICT REHABILITATION PROJECT REMAINS IN OPERATION.

3. IN ADDITION TO THE UN PROJECTS, LAO PARTY AND GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES USE VARIOUS METHODS OF COERION TO DISCOURAGE THE USE OF OPIUM. THESE EFFORTS ARE FREQUENTLY COMBINED WITH THE POLITICAL REHABILITATION OF THOSE CONSIDERED TO BE ANTI-SOCIAL REMNANTS OF THE PERIOD OF EXTENSIVE WESTERN INFLUENCE IN LAOS. FOR EXAMPLE A NUMBER OF ADDICTS ARE IN CONFINEMENT FOR REEDUCATION ON SEVERAL ISLAND PRISONS. FURTHER CLOUDING THE ISSUE OF LAO NARCOTICS POLICY ARE REPORTS AND RUMORS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT IS ENCOURAGING OR AT LEAST DOING NOTHING TO PREVENT THE CULTIVATION OF OPIUM FOR SALE ABROAD. IN VIENTIANE THE USE OF OPIUM AND MARIJUANA REMAINS RELATIVELY UNRESTRICTED.

4. IN ORDER TO OBTAIN AN OFFICIAL VERSION OF LPDR NARCOTICS POLICY, AN EMBASSY OFFICER CALLED ON VANNOVONG PANYA, AN OFFICIAL OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S SECOND (DEVELOPED NATIONS) DEPARTMENT. VANNOVONG CONFIRMED THAT AT PRESENT THERE WERE NO LAWS CONCERNING NARCOTICS IN LAOS. HE WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT IT WAS LPDR POLICY TO DISCOURAGE THE USE OF OPIUM AND TO USE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT PRESSURES TO THIS END. HE ADDED THAT EACH CASE WAS HANDLED ON AN AD HOC BASIS BY

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LOCAL VILLAGE OFFICIALS AND THAT PENALTIES VARIED FROM CASE TO CASE DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. AS FAR AS CULTIVATION WAS CONCERNED, VANNOVONG SAID THAT IT WAS LAO POLICY TO PROHIBIT OPIUM CULTIVATION IN AREAS EXCEPT THOSE IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT PERMITTED PRODUCTION FOR MEDICAL PURPOSES.

6. VANNOVONG TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE WAS IN THE PROCESS OF DRAFTING REGULATIONS CONCERNING NARCOTICS, AND HE PROMISED TO PASS ON THE EMBASSY REQUEST FOR INFORMATION TO THE JUSTICE MINISTRY FOR A MORE DETAILED REPLY.

7. WE HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THE LAO GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE US WITH MORE DETAILED INFORMATION. IN THE INTERIM WE SUGGEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT DRAW ON THE LESS SENSITIVE PORTIONS OF THIS TELEGRAM FOR INCLUSION IN ITS COMPILATION OF NARCOTICS LAWS. IN ANY EVENT, AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO MAY TRAVEL TO LAOS SHOULD BE INFORMED THAT IN SPITE OF THE LACK OF SPECIFIC NARCOTICS LAWS, FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN DETAINED OR EXPelled FOR THE USE

OF NARCOTICS OR OTHER DRUGS AND THAT A NUMBER OF LAO
ARE IN CONFINEMENT FOR THE USE OF OPIUM.
ROBERTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NARCOTICS, DRUG CONTROL, LAW
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VIENTI00796
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780307-0304
Format: TEL
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780716/aaaaanun.tel
Line Count: 119
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 10e5576c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SNM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 170187
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1874337
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NARCOTICS LAWS
TAGS: SNAR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/10e5576c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014